



REGIONAL EMPOWERMENT, ECONOMIC GROWTH: Accessing Technology in the Delta Region



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Speaker Bios

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Mike Stagg is the founder and director of digitallouisiana.org, an information technology consultancy that helps Louisiana communities, businesses and organizations work their way into the mainstream of the new, digital economy. In that capacity, he has worked to develop and articulate a vision of what Louisiana might look like if it capitalized on the opportunities that have emerged there in the wake of the deregulation of the telecommunications industry.

"The Telecommunications Act of 1996, the emergence of information technology as a force reshaping business and the economy, combined with good planning and luck have created enormous digital economic opportunity in Louisiana that we must seize if our state is going hold any promise for our children," Stagg maintains.

He cites national and regional fiber optic networks running through the state in close proximity to post-secondary education institutions as the blocks upon which Louisiana's digital economy can be built. It is a message Stagg has been taking to local, state and regional leaders for the past four years and those efforts are beginning to bear fruit. MetroVision has used digitallouisiana.org's "Rivers of Light, Corridors of Opportunity" map of fiber networks and post-secondary institutions to successfully lure Information Technology businesses into New Orleans and the River Region. The Louisiana Economic Development Council, the Department of Economic Development, Governor Mike Foster's economic development consulting team, and the Division of Administration have used Stagg's work as the basis for their initiatives to grow and develop an information technology sector in Louisiana.

Stagg has worked on technology initiatives with the Foundation for the Mid South (Jackson, MS), the St. Joseph Arts Council in Louisiana's Tensas Parish, the Entergy Team Tensas program there, the Lafayette Economic Development Authority (LEDA), the Lafayette Utility System, and the CenLA Chamber of Commerce.

For two years Mike was a charter member of the now dormant Rural Policy Research Institute's (RUPRI) Telecommunications Research Panel that studied the impact of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 on rural communities. He also served as a member of Governor Foster's Rural Development Advisory Committee during the governor's first term.

He has attended numerous regional and national telecommunications and economic development conferences and done extensive research and reading on these related issues.

Mike Stagg has made presentations at numerous conferences including: the 1999 Region Five Economic Development Administration Conference in Dallas, TX; the 2000 Southeast Louisiana Economic Development Conference in Hammond; Entergy's Louisiana Team City 2000 conference in Baton Rouge; TelecomLA in Lafayette; RuralTeleCon 2000 conference on rural

telecommunications issues in Aspen, CO; the Southern Growth Policies Board's TelecomSouth II: One South, Digitally Divided in Roanoke, VA, last October; and “B2B on the Bayou” a four-parish electronic commerce conference held in New Iberia, LA in November, 2000.